

NEWS BRIEFING

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Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Public Affairs)

**Secretary of Defense William J. Perry
DoD Press Briefing - Haiti Operations
Monday, September 26, 1994**

Secretary Perry: Thank you.

I'm sorry I'm a few minutes late. We were up in New York meeting with General Grachev who is here with President Yeltsin as part of the summit meeting preparations. I had a very interesting meeting with General Grachev. That's not the subject of this briefing, though. I'm going to talk to you a little bit about Haiti.

General Shalikashvili and I were in Haiti on Saturday. We met with Ambassador Swing. We met with thousands of our troops and all of our commanders there. I wanted to thank our troops for the outstanding work that they've done and I wanted to consult with our commanders on their understanding of the mission and whether they needed additional resources to execute the mission. I was impressed with the morale, with the capability of the forces and with the clear vision of our commanders. I was enormously impressed with the skill of the logistics operations. That's a different story for a different day, but this was really an incredible logistics achievement--bringing 14,000 troops in in six days, two companies of armored personnel carriers, large quantities of engineering equipment, tons of materiel and supplies.

We have unloaded, so far, hundreds of transport aircraft. They're coming in at the rate of about 30 a day. We've unloaded more than eight roll-on/roll-off ships. The first roll-on/roll-off ship was in port one hour after our assault force landed there to open the port. We have begun. And all in all, this was just an incredible logistics operation. Let me bring you up to date with some of the things that are going on today and tomorrow.

We begin today the repatriation of Haitians from Guantanamo. The first load of 220 will arrive today. There will be a welcoming ceremony at Port-au-

Prince. They'll be met by Ambassador Swing. They will be repatriated and back in their own country again.

We are beginning a disarmament program. We have already collected all of the heavy weapons. General Shali and I both saw all of those weapons while we were there on Saturday. We are beginning a weapons buy-back program tomorrow. We will be offering to buy back handguns for \$50 and heavier weapons for a correspondingly-higher price.--We will pay for this in the local currency, which is called Gourdes. This program, of course, is known as Gourdes for Guns. It will be getting underway tomorrow.

General Shelton has arranged with General Cedras to begin to disarm the militia and to remove some of the heavier weapons from the police force. We have begun an extensive program in humanitarian aid. The first barge is arriving today with a large quantity of food and medicine. We have already been delivering--from our own military supplies--medical supplies and equipment to the hospitals at Cap-Haitien and Port-au-Prince. We have also been delivering food from our own military supplies. But the large quantities of humanitarian shipments are beginning to arrive today.

We have now more than 1,000 MPs--in fact the number is just under 1,200 MPs in country--and they're beginning their oversight and monitoring of the Haitian fleet at the precinct level, the headquarters level, and at the patrol level. We are now spreading out in Haiti. As of today, we are in four different cities. We have our military forces located in four different cities, and that fanning out will continue this week.

We have one battalion of the 10th Mountain Division. It has arrived in Cap-Haitien as per our original plan, and they will continue to arrive during the week. In time, they will replace the Marine group which is now based there.

We have the advanced unit, an assessment team, really, from CARICOM. That's the Caribbean battalion. It was in Port-au-Prince while General Shali and I were there. We talked with the leaders of that assessment team. In the mean time, their members continue their training in Puerto Rico, and we expect them to be joining.... that battalion will be coming to Haiti in the near future.

The United Nations is deploying elements of a 50-person advance team for UNMIH. UNMIH is the UN Mission in Haiti. The first 16 of that advanced team are already in Haiti.

Finally, there's a headquarters unit of the international police force that has already arrived in Port-au-Prince. So very much is happening in terms of the activity, expanding both geographically to different locations in the country and intensity.

When General Shali and I were there, we both told the troops we talked with to be prepared for difficult days ahead. They have a very complex mission in that on the one hand they are there as friends and not invaders, and that's manifested by the delivery of food and medicine. They're working to restore the electricity; we have engineering teams that have arrived to try to get the generating plants going again. So, on the one hand, they are there as friends. On the other hand, they're there to execute a mission. The mission is to restore security and stability in Haiti--to provide an environment whereby the legal government may return no later than October 15th.

Summarizing the mission. It's, number one, to ensure that Haiti's military leaders comply with the September 18th agreement; and number two, to establish this secure and stable environment in which the legal government can return, into which humanitarian aid can flow, and to permit refugees to return home. All of these will be consequences of establishing that safe and secure environment.

Our forces will also assist the legitimate government in taking the first step towards creating a civilian police force and professionalizing the Haitian armed forces.

We will also assist the Haitian security forces in maintaining the essential civic order and protecting the international presence, the key facilities, and the humanitarian relief effort. Let me be specific about what that involves.

The agreement which was signed on September 18th allows the FADH, that's the Haitian military, to continue to perform its policing missions until the military steps down or until October 15th, whichever comes earlier. That is a part of the agreement. Therefore, the Haitians do retain responsibility for maintaining civic order. But I must be clear that we will not tolerate the use of excessive force against civilians by the Haitian military or police, and U.S. forces do have the authority to intervene if they witness grave abuses that threaten life.

The second point I make about this policing function is that we will have 1200 U.S. military police charged with monitoring these Haitian security forces with the goal of affecting their behavior without assuming their responsibilities. As I said, these MPs are going to be assigned to headquarters, precincts, and patrol levels.

In the event of widespread civil disorders, in addition to the military police force, we have a quick reaction military force that has the capability to quell any such violent outbreaks. This consists of combat forces including Bradley fighting vehicles.

The U.S. forces. I will also say, will take appropriate action to protect themselves when they are threatened, as events of this past weekend demonstrated.

We regret, of course, the loss of life of the Haitians in that event over the weekend, but I want to be very explicit that the Marines were operating within their rules of engagement. Their rules of engagement explicitly authorize them to use lethal force whenever any armed Haitians act in a hostile or a threatening way. That is what they did.

With those opening comments, I will be available for some questions. I have a Senior Defense Official here also, and he will follow me and take more of your questions since I have to go shortly over to the Senate for a briefing there.

Q: Mr. Secretary, all last week you and other officials in the government were saying we will not assume the law and order policing kind of functions that it appeared as though the U.S. would be doing initially. You said the U.S. would not do that. Now in Cap-Haitien there is no police force, so American forces are doing the police functions. So are we seeing the dreaded mission creep here in a major way in this one city already?

A: We are resisting and will continue to resist mission creep. We will do what is necessary in the exigencies of the moment, but in Cap-Haitien we will be... We have already asked General Cedras to return his police to their posts. They will work in conjunction with U.S. MPs and in conjunction with international police monitors. We will not undertake to perform routine police functions. That's not part of our mission and that's not what we're set up to do, and that's not what we're manned to do.

Q: He has agreed?

A: Yes, he has agreed to that.

Q: Without a police force, who does the police work? No one?

A: This plan assumes--requires--the Haitian police perform the basic police functions under the supervision of the United States military police.

Q: But as you disarm the Haitian military, and you talked about taking some more of the heavy weapons and that sort of thing, doesn't that increase the likelihood of reprisals and revenge attacks on them? And the second part of the question, are you going to send any more troops, other than the number of 15,000 that you mentioned, in order to keep civil order?

A: We don't believe we need any more troops than the 14,000 to 15,000 that are part of our ongoing plan. We see no evidence of that yet. The only weapons that we are taking away from the Haitian army are heavy weapons. The armored personnel carriers, artillery, and mortars--which we do not believe are required--are appropriate for police functions.

Q: Why do you think it's possible to professionalize the military and police in Haiti who have no such tradition?

A: We've had a program for some time worked out in conjunction with President Aristide and his advisers, to do two things. First of all, to bring in international police monitors and international police trainers; and secondly, to work partly with the police who are already there. Not all of them, but some of them who have been appropriately vetted--appropriately-checked out. And secondly, to work with other Haitians. We have interviewed, over the past week or so, several thousand Haitians in Guantanamo and selected some number of those for purposes of training. That training program will be providing training for police as well.

Q: Why did you and General Shali not meet with Lieutenant General Cedras when you were in Port-au-Prince? Does he consider this a snub? Do you have any reason to believe that he will stay in the country or will leave the country after October 15th?

A: General Shali and I were not down there on a political mission. We were down there on a mission to visit our troops and their commanders. That was the only objective we had for this trip. We didn't meet with anybody except our own troops and commanders. We didn't meet with the representatives of the Aristide government that were there or any of the Parliament, either. We met only with our own troops and commanders. There was no compelling reason not to do that; it was a function of time. We had a very crowded schedule. As it was, we had a difficult time getting to each of the four sites we wanted to go to during the six or so hours we were there.

Q: Do you have any reason to believe that Cedras will leave Haiti? Or will he remain after October 15th?

A: I'm not an independent source of information on that question. I can only repeat to you what people who have talked with him, including the Carter mission, have said. Some of them have said that he states he does not intend to leave the country. I repeat to you that the agreement does not require him to leave the country. We believe that it would be wise for him to leave the country, and when it comes down to it, he may actually decide to do that, but that's only a forecast.

Q: You said the forces are going into other cities. Could you tell us what your sense is of the security situation in the rest of the countries? And do you see the incident in Cap-Haitien as an isolated one or a problem that could occur in where the residents of Haiti would be going in and attacking police headquarters? Instead of having a harmonious working relationship here, you have a lot of pretty difficult relationships...

A: We've seen already examples of the two major kinds of problems we expected to see. One is the problem of police or military abuses against the citizens,

and we've taken fairly strong action to try to keep that from recurring. Secondly, the danger of the other side of the coin is that the citizens of Haiti might excessively react to the removal of the restraints that they've had and start attacking the police. We've seen a few examples of that. We have a problem of maintaining civic order in both directions. It's going to be a difficult task, we don't doubt that.

I will say that my own personal impression from the thousands of Haitians that I saw when I was down there driving through Port-au-Prince and walking through Cap-Haitien is that they are certainly enthusiastic about the presence of American troops there. We are being treated as friends, as I said, not invaders.

Q: Do you have any idea why it took the Marines 45 minutes to get to stop the trashing of the Haitian police headquarters?

A: We're looking into that now. I don't have the report, and I don't want to give you a quick reaction on that one.

Q: Is that a reasonable amount of time, or...

A: We would like to be able to respond quickly when we see civic order being threatened. I can't give you, as I stand here, the careful assessment--informed assessment--of why that took so long.

Q: You made the observation that the military is being greeted as a friend. How friendly will the reactions from Haitian citizens be the first time that the U.S. military has to quell a disorder by overly-enthusiastic supporters of Aristide? There's a certain delicacy there. How do you plan to handle it?

A: I will just repeat to you, this is a difficult, complex mission we're on. One of the things that will help us accomplish that mission is having established and developed that we really are friends with the Haitian people. It's not just a question of how our forces and how our military police react, it's also the whole environment. That's why I believe it is very, very important to get this humanitarian aid moving, and moving very quickly. The food, the medicine, getting electricity going again. All of those are very critical to certifying--making credible-- to the Haitians that we really are there as their friend.

I'm sorry, I have to get to the Senate now for a briefing. I will be discussing with Congress and recommending to them that they not include a date certain in any legislation that they take. I think...

Q: [inaudible]

A: That's what my recommendation will be. It will complicate our military operations. We have every interest and every desire in getting this mission completed and getting out of there as quickly as possible. We will spend every effort to do that, but we do not think it would be helpful. In fact, we think it would be unhelpful to have a date certain put in the legislation.

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Thank you. Let me turn over the floor to the Background Briefer.

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